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# FRIM: Hire 'tree docs'

## Experts can help protect natural landscape, developers told

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**PETALING JAYA:** Development projects done without the guidance of "tree doctors" could result in the loss of an area's natural landscape and even kill the trees in the long run, said the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia.

Its director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod lamented the "general lack of awareness in the country" about getting tree experts including arborists involved in such projects.

He said proper conservation of original trees or planting of suitable trees in an area could in fact greatly enhance the value of properties.

"They (developers) may underestimate the impact of disturbances caused by development and construction work to the trees and environment.

"The construction activities can also cause injuries to the trunk, bark as well as branches, and result in sickness and death of the trees in the long

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— DATUK DR ABD LATIF MOHMOD

run," Dr Abd Latif told *The Star*.

An arborist is a tree doctor, trained in the art and science of planting, caring for and maintaining individual trees as well as ensuring the health of trees and public safety.

Dr Abd Latif said certified arborists were an asset to developers as they could specify the "dos and don'ts" around the project site when dealing with the selected trees.

This includes defining the tree protection zone,

placing secure fencing around the base of all trees requiring protection and putting up "No Entry" warning signs around the zone.

"This will also help to ensure public safety because well-cared-for trees are less likely to become a hazard," he said.

However, he said there were only 65 certified arborists in Malaysia (six of them at the institute) compared to more than 100 in Singapore.

Dr Abd Latif added that not many professionals went for the certification programme due to factors like cost and course difficulty.

Recent cases where development plans clashed with conservation concerns include the Taiping Municipal Council's plan to develop eight food and souvenir kiosks near the iconic century-old raintrees in the Taiping Lake Gardens.

However, it called off the plan and suggested alternative sites instead following a signature campaign from several NGOs and local residents who feared the trees would be threatened and the park's tranquil atmosphere harmed.